

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 AID-20 IO-14 DPW-01 DRC-01 /129 W

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R 311032Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1269

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 1348

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, VS

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE GVN-HOA HAO CONFRONTATION

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION AMEMBASSY SAIGON FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO
JANUARY 29 REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION

QUOTE

CAN THO 0027

1. A HIGH RANKING MR 4 OFFICIAL HAS TOLD US THAT CORPS
COMMANDER MG NGHI HAS ISSUED AN ULTIMATUM TO HOA HAO FACTION
LEADER LUONG TRONG TUONG WBD HIS MILITARY DEPUTY HAI TAP TO
DISBAND THE SELF-STYLED HOA HAO PROTECTIVE FORCE LED BY TAP.
THE DEFENSE FORCE COMPRISES ABOUT 1,000 HOA HAO YOUTHS, MOST
OF WHOM ARE DRAFT DODGERS, AND IS BASPD IN A PAGODA IN CHO
MOI DISTRICT, AN GIANG PROVINCE. THE GROUP ACTS AS BODYGUARD
FOR TUONG AND HIS PROPERTY. THEY ALSO HARASS THE POPULATION
AND ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN HOA HAO INTERNECINE
ASSASSINATIONS AND OTHER VIOLENCE. IN SEPTEMBER, FOR EXAMPLE,
THEY KILLED A CAPTAIN BELONGING TO THE RIVAL DUC HOAI SANH
F ACTION OF THE BUU SON KY HUONG SECT WHO WAS IMPRUDENT ENOUGH
TO LEAD A GROUP OF HIS OWN TO CHO MOI DISTRICT (CAN TSB 0732).

2. OUR SOURCE SAID THAT NGHI HAS ORDERED TAP'S PROTECTIVE
FORCE TO DISARM ITSELF AND INTEGRATE ITS PERSONNEL INTO
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RVNAF UNITS. AT THE MOMENT, HE SAID, THE GROUP HAS WITHDRAWN

TO THE CONFINES OF THE PAGODA BUT HAS NEITHER DISBANDED NOR SURRENDERED ITS ARMS. ASKED WHAT THE NEXT MOVE WILL BE, HE STATED THAT, ALTHOUGH THE FORCE WAS THREATENED WITH MILITARY OPERATIONS TO DISARM THEM, MR 4 CANNOT PROCEED WITH SUCH OPERATIONS WITHOUT A SPECIFIC ORDER FROM SAIGON. HE IMPLIED STRONGLY THAT SUCH AN OPERATION AGAINST TAP'S FORCE IS SO POLITICALLY SENSITIVE THAT MG NGHI WOULD NOT TAKE IT UPON HIMSELF TO PROCEED WITHOUT SAIGON APPROVAL.

3. COMMENT: HAI TAP IS A PARTICULARLY VIOLENT AND EXCITABLE MAN. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT A REAL SHOW OF FORCE BY MR 4 WOULD RESULT EITHER IN HIS QUICK CAPITULATION OR IN HIS RUNNING AWAY. HIS PERSONAL CHARACTER, HOWEVER, LEAVES OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE MIGHT STAND AND FIGHT. WE CONSIDER THE FORMER OUTCOME MORE LIKELY BUT DO NOT COMPLETELY DISCOUNT THE LATTER. TUONG'S INFLUENCE IN SAIGON MAY, OF COURSE, PRECLUDE ANY SUCH MOVE BY THE GVN. THE DECISION WILL PROBABLY BE MADE BY PRESIDENT THIEU HIMSELF. SIGNED LEHMAN
END QUOTE

QUOTE: EMBASSY COMMENT: PLEASE SEE SAIGON A-12, JANUARY 19, 1974, FOR BACKGROUND ON VIOLENCE AMONG HOA HAO LEADERSHIP.
END QUOTE
MARTIN

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